

# Maurice Hinchey NEWS

## 22nd CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **HINCHEY TESTIFIES IN SUPPORT OF I-86 IMPROVEMENTS**

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-22) today testified at a hearing on the reauthorization of federal highway and transit programs. The hearing was held by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Subcommittee on Highways, Transit and Pipelines to allow House members to advocate for priority transportation projects. Hinchey's prepared remarks follow:

"I am here to request the Committee's support for a series of projects in my district upgrading NYS Route 17 to Interstate I-86. These projects have national significance, as they are part of a program to upgrade all 381 miles of Route 17 to interstate standards.

"I-86 will connect I-90 at Erie, Pennsylvania to I-87 at Harriman, New York. The upgrade has been completed from Erie to Corning and that stretch of interstate was designated as I-86 in December. But projects on 204 miles of Route 17, from Corning to Harriman are in various stages of planning, design and construction, and require additional, high-priority federal funds in order for the benefits of the upgrade to be realized.

"The New York State Department of Transportation has identified 17 projects in my district alone directly related to upgrading to I-86, costing over \$220 million. These important projects will eliminate intersections and driveways, and improve the geometric configuration of many interchanges and exits, bringing Route 17 up to federal highway standards.

"NYSDOT estimates the total cost of upgrading the 204-mile portion between East Corning and Harriman to interstate standards to be \$550 million. Most of the conversions could be completed within five years with adequate state and federal funding.

"While most of the needed work is in my district, this upgrade will realize tremendous economic benefits to the state, region and national interstate system.

"By greatly improving transportation, the upgrade and designation of Route 17 as I-86 will make the Southern Tier, the Catskills, and the lower Hudson Valley more competitive and able to attract substantial growth in business, industry, and tourism. The upgrade of I-86 will pay dividends far exceeding the costs, and the sooner the upgrades are completed and the designation is made, the greater the financial benefits to the state and region.

"The economic benefits of the upgrade were quantified in a study prepared by Wilbur Smith Associates, which concluded that completing the I-86 upgrades in a span of eight years would result in an impact of \$3.2 billion over 20 years. Additionally, the State of New York

stands to gain approximately \$82 million through increased state sales tax revenue. By delaying the upgrade to 21 years, the study found that \$711 million in economic development growth was forfeited and the state stood to lose \$18.6 million in potential sales tax revenue growth. Clearly, it is imperative that these projects receive funding as expeditiously as possible. The project has tremendous benefits for congestion mitigation and safety. By meeting interstate standards, the highest national standards for highways, congestion will be mitigated and an estimated \$300 million in safety benefits will be realized in the next 20 years. Most importantly, lives will be saved through a reduction in accidents.

"Clearly, with over \$220 million in identified federal need in my district, a lot of work remains to be done to complete the conversion to interstate standards. I urge the Committee to support the maximum amount of funding for these high priority I-86 upgrades that will benefit not only my district but the entire state, region and country."